

Social Security Program

The Social Security program—Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI)—provides monthly benefits to workers and their families when earnings stop or are reduced because the worker retires, dies, or becomes disabled. The amount of the worker's retirement insurance (old-age) or disability benefit is based on the worker's level of earnings in employment or self-employment covered by the Social Security program. The benefit amount for an auxiliary or survivor beneficiary is based on a percentage of the worker's benefit. Monthly benefits are payable to retired workers at age 65 (reduced benefits at 62) or to disabled workers at any age. Auxiliary and survivor beneficiaries must generally meet an age, a disability, or child care requirement.

Nationally, in December 1998 benefits were paid to 44,246,000 persons. This number included 27,511,000 retired workers, 5,214,000 widows and widowers, 4,698,000 disabled workers, 3,054,000 wives and husbands, and 3,769,000 children. Social Security beneficiaries represented 16.0 percent of the total population and 91.0 percent of the population 65 or older.

Monthly benefits averaged \$780 for retired workers; \$749 for nondisabled widows and widowers; \$733 for disabled workers; and \$386 for wives and husbands of retired and disabled workers. Average payments for children of deceased workers were \$510; for children of retired workers, \$358; and for children of disabled workers, \$208.

Monthly payments in December 1998 totaled \$31.3 billion. Of this amount, \$22.8 billion was paid to retired workers and their dependents; \$4.8 billion to survivors; and \$3.8 billion to disabled workers and their dependents. Average benefits and total monthly payments include the

1.3 percent cost-of-living increase effective December 1998.

In the **Virgin Islands**, benefits were paid to 12,490 persons. This number included 7,500 retired workers; 1,020 widows and widowers; 1,050 disabled workers; 880 wives and husbands; and 2,040 children.

Retired workers in the Virgin Islands received an average of \$641 per month; widows and widowers, \$553; disabled workers, \$693; and wives and husbands of retired and disabled workers, \$295. Average payments for children were: \$299 for children of retired workers; \$374 for children of deceased workers; and \$220 for children of disabled workers.

Monthly payments in December 1998 totaled \$7 million. Of this amount, \$5 million was paid to retired workers and their dependents; \$1 million to survivors; and \$1 million to disabled workers and their dependents.

Earnings and Employment

Nationally, in 1996, the latest year for which State data are available, about 143.5 million persons worked in employment that was covered by the Social Security (OASDI) program. They had covered earnings of \$3.1 trillion and more than \$486 billion was paid in Social Security and Medicare taxes. Of this amount, \$381 billion was allocated to the OASDI Trust Funds and the remainder was deposited in the Medicare Hospital Insurance (HI) Trust Fund.

In the **Virgin Islands** in 1996, about 50,000 residents worked in Social Security covered employment. They had covered earnings of \$900 million and about \$140 million was paid in Social Security and Medicare taxes. Of this amount, \$110 million was allocated to the OASDI Trust Funds and the remainder was deposited in the HI Trust Fund.